Stress-Free Thanksgiving Prep Timeline

Host an abundant, oven-free holiday buffet with this 3-day make-ahead schedule.

Free up your oven and eliminate last-minute kitchen panic. Rely on slow cookers, stovetop sides, and room-temperature dishes for a beautifully orchestrated meal.



Key Buffet Metrics

3:2 ratio
Cheese to meats for no-cook appetizer

4 hours
On low for slow cooker stuffing

4 minutes
Blanch time for room temp green beans

Up to 2 hrs
Safe heat for thermal gravy boat

1 gallon
Night-before pre-batched punch

Min 12 in
Between major dishes on the buffet

Makeshift Double Boiler

Hold your freshly mashed potatoes at the perfect serving temperature by setting the covered bowl over a pot of barely simmering water.

3-Day Oven-Juggling Timeline

1. **Day 1: Prep aromatics** Chop 4 cups of raw onions, celery, and carrots for stuffing and gravy.
2. **Day 2: Assemble stuffing** Mix bread and broth in a 6-quart slow cooker insert, then refrigerate overnight.
3. **Day 3: Roast turkey** Keep Thursday morning relaxed by reserving the oven strictly for the main course.

Choose the Best Bread Base

Find your row: **Your bread type**

Your bread type	Your pick	Why
Sourdough or French	Dry 48 hours	Best for classic savory herb profiles
Brioche	Dry 72 hours	Ideal for sweeter sausage mixes
Cornbread	Dry 24 hours	Perfect for Southern-style recipes

Scale Your Buffet Essentials

Guests	18-inch appetizer boards	Matching glassware
8	1 boards	8 glasses
16	2 boards	16 glasses
24	3 boards	24 glasses

Crucial Prep & Plating Checks

- [ ] Tear bread into 1-inch cubes ahead of time to stale.
- [ ] Season boiling vegetable water with 1 tablespoon kosher salt.
- [ ] Shock beans in half ice, half water for 3 minutes.
- [ ] Warm ceramic potato serving bowl thoroughly under hot water.
- [ ] Mash potatoes by hand with a manual ricer for fluffiness.
- [ ] Pre-warm insulated gravy vessel with boiling water for 5 minutes.
- [ ] Float fresh citrus slices in punch 30 minutes before arrival.

My Buffet Menu Notes

Enjoy a beautifully seamless holiday gathering with your loved ones this year!